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1 - Shelter-in-place continues after Ship Channel collision, Houston Chronicle, 3/10/2015

<http://www.chron.com/houston/article/Ships-collided-at-foggy-Ship-Channel-6123633.php>

The Ship Channel remains closed Tuesday morning to all traffic from light 86 to the Fred Hartman Bridge a day after two ships collided near Morgan's Point, according to the Coast Guard.

2 - Safe running water remains out of reach for a remote colonia built on broken promises, Texas Tribune, 3/8/2015

<http://apps.texastribune.org/undrinkable/las-pampas/>

Every three days, Victor Manuel Juarez checks the straps on a 500-gallon plastic water tank mounted to a flatbed trailer behind his pickup. After putting on his short-brimmed straw hat, the 71-year-old kisses his wife, Rosa María, goodbye and drives into the nearby city of Presidio.

3 - Osage County oil producers blast BIA environmental impact study that has them at standstill, Tulsa World, 3/10/2015

http://www.tulsaworld.com/homepage3/osage-county-oil-producers-blast-bia-environmental-impact-study-that/article_6c9d3f17-7d9b-5620-8f52-e4b045f078b0.html

Across the Arkansas River in Kay County, he can apply for a permit one day and start drilling for oil the next. But on this side of the river, Mike Mackey hasn't received a permit since last summer.

4 - Confusion continues in Oklahoma over OG&E's Mustang plant replacement plan, Texas Tribune, 3/10/2015

<http://newsok.com/confusion-continues-in-oklahoma-over-oges-mustang-plant-replacement-plan/article/5399889>

Confusion continued Monday over whether the replacement of Oklahoma Gas and Electric Co.'s Mustang generating plant should still be included as a part of a \$1.1 billion case before state regulators.

5 - Emails describe meetings between oil industry, earthquake researchers, The Oklahoman, 3/9/2015

<http://newsok.com/emails-describe-meetings-between-oil-industry-earthquake-researchers/article/5399261>

Oil and natural gas industry representatives met with the state's head seismologist over the past several years because they were "nervous about any dialog" connecting the state's ongoing earthquake swarm and industry activity, according to a series of emails published this week by EnergyWire.

6 - CDC seeks more clues to bioterror lab accident, USA Today, 3/9/2015

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/03/09/cdc-returns-to-tulane-primate-center/24672499/>

Federal health investigators are back at the Tulane National Primate Research Center in Louisiana this week seeking the source of the lab accident that has somehow exposed at least seven monkeys to a deadly bioterror bacteria. State officials, meanwhile, are planning to test wildlife and domestic animals in the surrounding area for possible exposure.

7 - Amended Bill Would Prohibit Cities and Towns from 'Effectively' Banning Oil and Gas Activities, NPR StateImpact, 3/5/2015

<http://stateimpact.npr.org/oklahoma/2015/03/09/amended-bill-would-prohibit-cities-and-towns-from-effectively-banning-oil-and-gas-activities/>

A proposed amendment to legislation limiting the power local governments have to regulate oil and gas operations expands the bill's language to prevent cities and towns from enacting rules "effectively" banning drilling, fracking and related activities.



8 - Obama administration poised to 'strike greatest blow to private property rights the modern era has seen' (opinion), Tulsa World, 3/10/2015

http://www.tulsaworld.com/opinion/othervoices/scott-pruitt-and-rand-paul-obama-administration-poised-to-strike/article_9c8c7324-662d-5c92-b761-a2519bbe27a8.html

Respect and protection of private property rights sets the United States apart from other nations and has fueled the greatest expansion of economic freedom the world has ever known. Indeed, private property rights are among the foundational rights of any democracy, not just ours.

9 - Defending The BHI Critique Of EPA Rules (opinion), KRWG, 3/9/2015

<http://krwg.org/post/defending-bhi-critique-epa-rules>

Gabe Elsner, an anti-fossil-fuel activist, recently published an Op-Ed criticizing a finding by the Beacon Hill Institute (BHI) that the EPA's clean power rules would inflict substantial harm on the New Mexico economy by driving up electric rates. My purpose is to respond to criticism which Elsner and his co-authors usually make when we release our studies.

10 - Arkansas joining states challenging EPA on emissions, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 3/10/2015

<http://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2015/mar/10/arkansas-joining-states-challenging-epa/>

Arkansas has been allowed to intervene in a lawsuit challenging a proposed Environmental Protection Agency rule limiting carbon emissions nationwide, state Attorney General Leslie Rutledge announced Monday.

11 - New concept in solar energy poised to catch on across US, Albuquerque Journal, 3/9/2015

<http://www.abqjournal.com/552193/biz/energy/new-concept-in-solar-energy-poised-to-catch-on-across-us.html>

A new concept in renewable energy is catching fire across the country, allowing customers who might find solar panels too expensive or impractical to buy green energy anyway. Community solar gardens first took off in Colorado a few years ago, and the model — also known as community or shared solar — has spread to Minnesota, California, Massachusetts and several other states.

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Shelter-in-place continues after Ship Channel collision

By Mike Glenn | March 9, 2015 | Updated: March 10, 2015 6:24am

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Photo By Petty Officer 3rd Class Dustin R. Williams/Coast Guard

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The chemical tanker Carla Maersk sits at anchor off Morgans Point after the crash.



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UPDATE: The Ship Channel remains closed Tuesday morning to all traffic from light 86 to the Fred Hartman Bridge a day after two ships collided near Morgan's Point, according to the Coast Guard.

Officials said they would assess the situation beginning at first light Tuesday, but so far they don't know when the channel would reopen. The Barbours Cut Terminal will not open as normal at 7 a.m. Tuesday and it is unknown when it resume operations.

As of 2 a.m. Tuesday, 28 ships were waiting to enter the channel while 21 were waiting to leave

ORIGINAL REPORT:

The Houston Ship Channel was closed to all traffic

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Monday after two ships, including one carrying toxic chemicals, collided into each other at a narrow spot near the foggy entrance.

The tanker Carla Maersk and the Liberian bulk carrier Conti Peridot struck about 12:30 p.m. near the community of Morgan's Point on the shores of Galveston Bay.

The 600-foot Danish-flagged Carla Maersk was carrying about 216,000 barrels of MTBE, a fuel additive, while the 623-foot Conti Peridot is a steel carrier, U.S. Coast Guard officials said.

Officials believe the collision caused a breach in three of the containers storing the MTBE. The leak has since been secured, officials said. The amount of MTBE that leaked was not immediately known.

"They're still (checking) the tanks to determine how much has been spilled," said U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer Amanda Emery.

There were no reports of any injuries from the collision.

Coast Guard officials said the hole in the ship remains but any remaining MTBE is below the waterline and doesn't pose a risk. The leak lasted about two hours.

The National Transportation Safety Board sent a team to investigate. According to a statement by the Coast Guard late Monday, the Barbours Cut Terminal will not open as normally scheduled at 7 a.m. Tuesday, as a precautionary measure.

"We want to make sure the ships are safe to actually move," said U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer Andy Kendrick.

The collision prompted a shelter in place for the few hundred people living in Morgan's Point. The residents there were warned to remain inside and not use their air conditioners.

The concern was because of the MTBE from the Carla Maersk. The fuel additive is a colorless liquid with a distinctive anesthetic-like odor, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It is used to raise the oxygen content of gasoline to help it burn more completely and reduce harmful emissions.

Officials are conducting air monitoring tests in the area.

"The air monitoring is going to tell us how much of a saturation there is," Kendrick said.

In most cases, after a fuel spill the Coast Guard will lay floating barriers around the lost material to prevent it from spreading. But officials said that isn't the best course of actions for Monday's incident.

"Our primary concern is the toxicity of the vapors," Kendrick said. "The toxicity and the flammability would go up if you try to boom it off."

Coast Guard officials said both ships were anchored in the area where they collided.

Officials with the Maersk Line could not be reached for comment later Monday.

The Associated Press reported that records show the Conti Peridot was built in 2011 and left Panama Feb. 27 for Houston. It previously had been to Shanghai, China. The Carla Maersk, built in 1999, left Venezuela Feb. 7, arrived in Houston last Wednesday and was headed back to Venezuela.

It was the second ship collision in the channel in less than a week. No pollution and no injuries were reported last Thursday when a 445-foot tanker and 892-foot container ship bumped about 15 miles up the channel from Galveston.

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UNDRINKABLE

Safe running water remains out of reach for a remote colonia built on broken promises

By [Alexa Ura](#) & [Neena Satija](#) | March 8, 2015



Las Pampas residents drive to a barren dirt lot in Presidio where five double-headed spigots serve as a makeshift water filling station. Photo by Jennifer Whitney.

SHARELINES



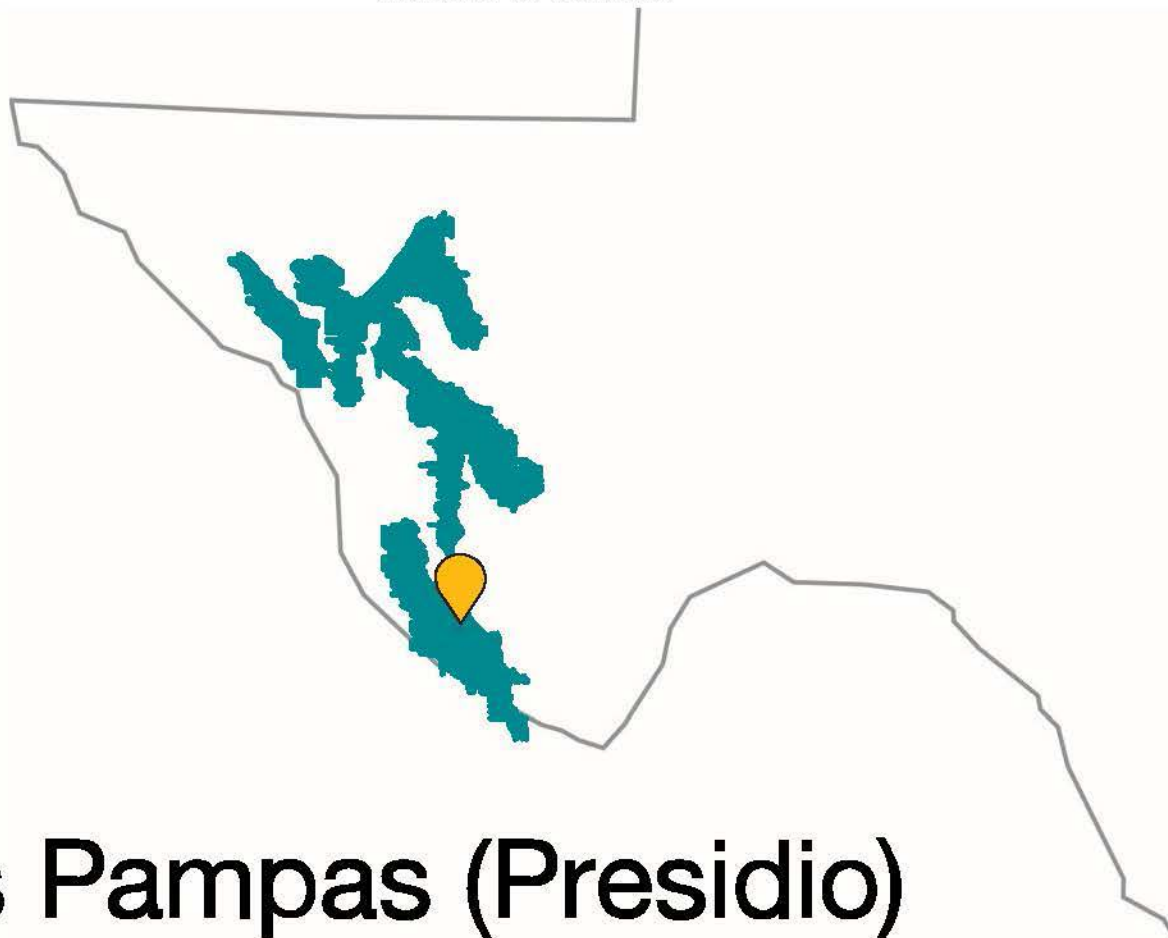
In the tiny colonia of Las Pampas, life with no running water means hauling it from miles away

Lea [este artículo](#) traducido al español por nuestros compañeros de Univision.

LAS PAMPAS — Every three days, Victor Manuel Juarez checks the straps on a 500-gallon plastic water tank mounted to a flatbed trailer behind his pickup. After putting on his short-brimmed straw hat, the 71-year-old kisses his wife, Rosa María, goodbye and drives into the nearby city of Presidio.

His destination is a barren dirt lot where five double-headed spigots poke from the ground, serving as a makeshift water filling station. He screws one end of a hose to a spigot, drops the other into his water tank, turns on the valve and waits. It'll be an hour before the tank is full and Juarez can head home to Rosa María.

This is life in the tiny West Texas colonia nestled between Big Bend Ranch State Park and the Chinati Mountains.



Las Pampas (Presidio)

● West Texas Bolsons aquifer

Because Presidio's water lines don't extend the five miles out to Las Pampas, the 30 or so families here live off a few days' worth of water at a time.

Like many residents of Texas' [colonias](#), the Juarezes moved to Las Pampas — an unincorporated subdivision — 12 years ago on a false promise that city water was coming soon. The woman who sold them their doublewide home skipped town shortly after they moved in, says Rosa María, 61.

The Juarezes, who came here from the Mexican border town of Ojinaga, say hauling water is their only alternative. Every day they worry whether that water is unsafe, opting for bottled water to drink and for cooking.

"We use it with fear," Rosa María said late last year while sitting at her kitchen table. "We never thought we'd move to the U.S. and not have running water, but you eventually get used to the

idea that this is part of your life.”

Researchers and public health officials say those fears are justified.

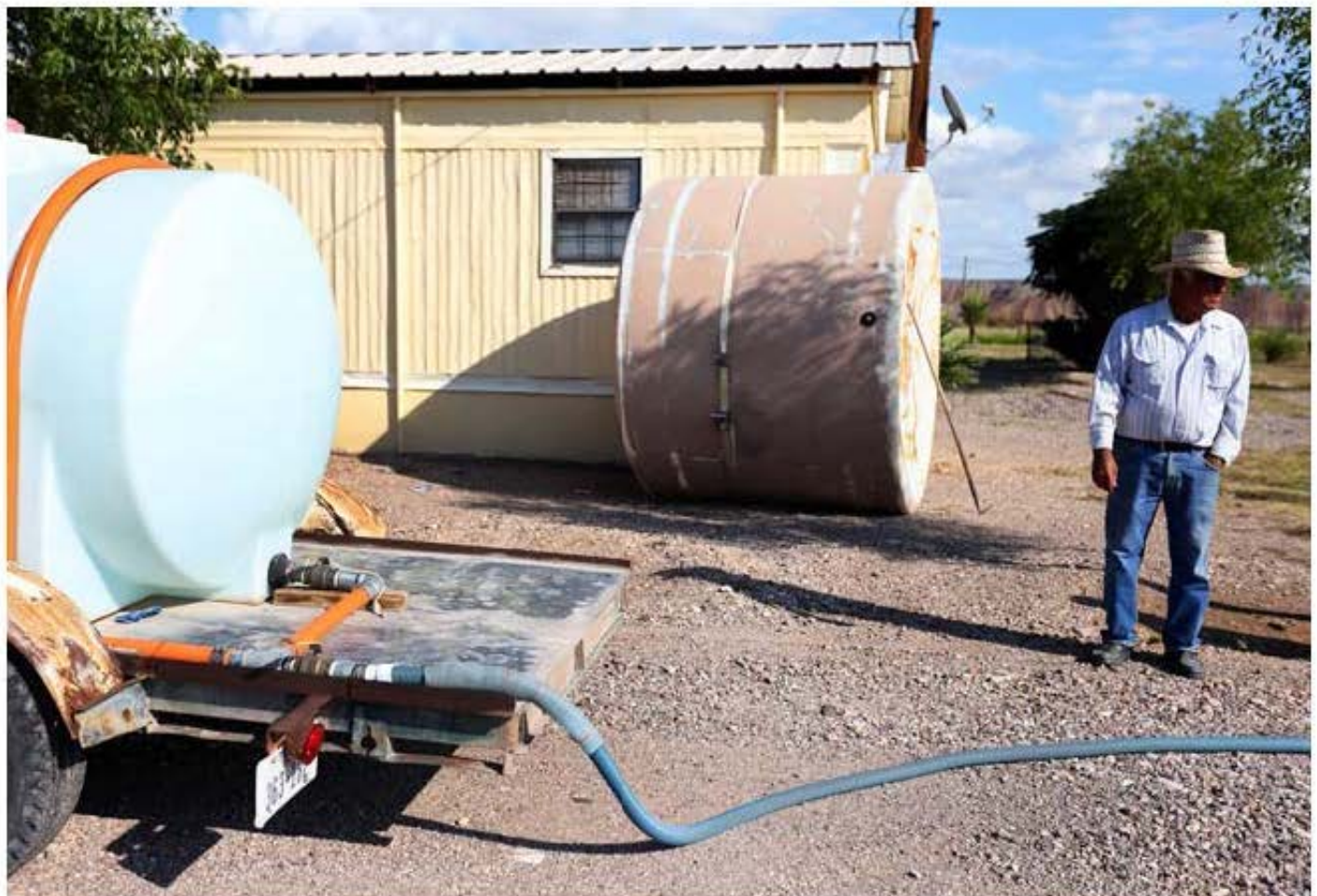
And the Juarezes are not alone: Tens of thousands of others **live** in impoverished colonias along the Texas-Mexico border, where a lack of basic amenities like running water, electricity and plumbing is the norm.

Many have no choice. Affordable housing can be hard to come by on the border, and most do not have the means to pick up and leave. “What they’re facing in Las Pampas is pretty much the history of colonia needs in the state through the years,” says state Sen. **José Rodríguez**, whose West Texas district includes Las Pampas.

DOING THE BEST THEY CAN

Water issues in the colonias **date back** to the 1950s, when cagey real estate developers sold cheap tracts of low-grade land in unincorporated areas to mostly poor Hispanic migrants, promising services that never arrived.

Colonias have **higher rates** of water-borne diseases than the rest of the state. In Las Pampas, residents generally complain about gastrointestinal problems, believing they are connected to the quality of their water, says Perna Garcia, associate director of **Texas A&M University’s Colonias Program**.



Victor Manuel Juarez, 71, is among the estimated 30 families living in Las Pampas, a colonia in rural Presidio County that doesn't have running water. Juarez drives into Presidio every three days to fill up a 500-gallon water tank. Photo by Jennifer Whitney.

The health risks are part and parcel of the way people like Juarez get their water. It may be clean when it comes out of the tap in Presidio. But from there it goes into a portable tank, then is transferred to a collection barrel from which it can be pumped into a home.

“There’s all sorts of contamination points” in the water hauling process, Garcia says. Residents may not clean their water tanks regularly, and they’re often outdoors, exposed to contamination. Families with just one collection barrel hooked up to their water pump must go without water for a day or two to clean it, so they usually do not.

If the water pump breaks or freezes in the middle of winter — like the Juarezes’ pump did a few years ago — residents must fill buckets of water to bathe.

Among families who solely drink bottled water, which does not contain fluoride like treated tap water does, children also deal with dental problems, Garcia adds.

WHEN HOPE RAN DRY

In the last 20 years, hundreds of millions of state and federal dollars have poured into border communities to address public health concerns. Water and sewer lines have been extended to some communities. Since 2006, at least 286 colonias have been connected to reliable sources of potable water, gained wastewater systems and gotten paved roads, according to [figures](#) provided by the Texas secretary of state’s office.

But the residents of Las Pampas — like at least 38,000 other Texans living in colonias — still face grave health risks without water that’s safe to drink.



Las Pampas, which is home to 30 families or so, is located in the mountainous desert landscape of West Texas about five miles outside of Presidio. Photo by Jennifer Whitney.

If communities want help, officials say, they need to take the initiative and ask for it. Someone has to step up and lead the effort. Such leaders are not an easy find in Presidio County, a mountainous desert landscape where few people live and where political priorities are scattered.

"It's so monumental, the need, that I think people just kind of walk away from it because you don't even know where to start," says Annette Gutierrez, executive director of the Rio Grande Council of Governments.

Providing running water for just 30 families in a remote community is an expensive proposition — one that Presidio County elected officials, more than 60 miles north in Marfa, have had trouble justifying to their other constituents, Gutierrez says.

Hope stirred in the late 1990s when Charlotte Ishikawa tried to establish a community-based water supplier and bring water to the area. Ishikawa had moved to Las Pampas in 1990, but only lived there for a year, finding it too burdensome to haul water for herself and her son, who has epilepsy.



A local representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture helped her apply for a \$350,000 grant to drill a community well. It took years to create the Las Pampas Water Supply Corporation and **secure** the grant.

Though many residents of Las Pampas were skeptical, Ishikawa says, she found about 30 families to sign on as members of the nonprofit water supplier.

The grant was finally awarded in 2004, but attempts to drill a well were unsuccessful. "We just never hit water," she says. "So we had to dissolve the whole project."

Since then, many of her former neighbors have moved to Presidio or out of the area altogether.

"It was not only disappointing. It was depressing," says Ishikawa, now 71. "Let me put it this way: I don't know if it's going to happen before I close my eyes, but I think someday it's going to happen."

Rodríguez, the state senator, says the state must take a more "affirmative" role in identifying colonias in need of assistance rather than waiting for a leader in the community to emerge.

"The question we should be asking ourselves is, here in the 21st century, should Texas — given how much we laud the economic 'miracle' here in the state — should we be a state that still has these third-world conditions in our border communities?" Rodríguez says.

LITTLE WILL, OR MONEY, LEFT TO HELP

Oddly, the state agency that tracks state efforts to improve life in the colonias is the secretary of state's office, which generally oversees elections and voting, but also manages the Colonia Initiatives Program.

Why are there still colonias?



Rodríguez says the program is “well-intentioned” but doesn’t have the tools and authority to be “much more aggressive in eradicating problems in the colonias.”

“They do the best they can, but I don’t think the state of Texas has provided enough support for that to be an effective program,” he says.

Enriqueta Caballero, the program’s director, says that the state is doing its best with existing resources, but that the prospect of tackling the water needs in every colonia is “daunting.”

“We are not a funding agency, we’re not a regulatory agency, we’re not an enforcement agency,” Caballero says. “Our role is to make sure we are a connector, or a bridge of sources.”

State funding for colonia water projects has dwindled in recent years. There’s no more money available for grants. The Texas Water Development Board gives out loans, but those can be hard to pay back. And even cheap loans the state has long offered to poor communities for water projects are in jeopardy. Texas lawmakers have so far not budgeted to pay for such programs past 2015.

For Henry Cuellar, a former state legislator from the Rio Grande Valley who pioneered much of Texas’ colonias legislation 20 years ago, it’s disappointing.

Back then, political will to address the problem was strong, says Cuellar, now a congressman. Now, he says, “I don’t hear much from Austin on colonias.” And in Washington, “a lot of our leaders still don’t understand what a colonia is.”

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HURDLES NEVER SEEM TO END

There is currently no state-led effort to help the residents of Las Pampas obtain running water. The city of Presidio did receive an \$80,000 grant from the federal government in February 2013 to study the possibility of extending its water service to Las Pampas.

That money came from the Border Environment Cooperation Commission, a [binational agency](#) created in the 1990s to improve environmental conditions along the U.S.-Mexico border.

But the effort has uncovered new challenges.



The city of Presidio can't extend water service to Las Pampas until it fixes problems with its own infrastructure. Photo by Jennifer Whitney.

City officials discovered that Presidio's water system has its own substantial problems, which

need to be fixed before the city extends its lines any further.

The city's aging distribution system works hard to push water uphill. Hundreds of city water meters aren't accurate, so Presidio loses at least 10 percent of its water sales revenue.

But the biggest concern for Presidio's public works director, Arturo Acosta, is a 1.7-million-gallon water storage tank that is old and rusting and has no backup. "If we lose that, we're sunk," he says. The city has no contingency plan.

An engineering consulting firm's report, the final draft of which is expected later this year, says that Presidio first has to raise its water rates to help pay for the estimated \$300-per-meter cost of fixing all 400 meters that aren't working properly, and to buy the equipment needed to fix pressure issues.

The city hasn't increased its water rates since 2002. "We've got to fix our sins inside the city," says Brad Newton, executive director of the Presidio Municipal Development District.

Newton says he's sure that once all those issues are fixed, Presidio can obtain a grant to cover all the costs of extending water to Las Pampas, though no one has determined how high that price tag might be.

And even if the pipes are extended, they will only run four miles beyond the city limit.

Flora Barraza lives more than five miles outside of Presidio.

For Barraza, 66, hope for running water mostly vanished when the well Ishikawa was drilling came up dry. Barraza, who has lived in Las Pampas for more than 20 years, used to walk out to the drilling site near her home to check on its progress, excitedly awaiting the day that running water in her house would become a reality.



Flora Barraza, 66, has lived in Las Pampas without running water for more than 20 years. She fills up a 200-gallon tank at a friend's house with just enough water for a few days. Photo by Jennifer Whitney.

Instead, she still makes the trek into Presidio to fill up her 200-gallon tank at a friend's house. In the winter, she fills up three times a week. In the heat of summer, she's forced to fill up every day.

When she has run out of water between trips, Barraza has resorted to bathing with rainwater she collects in large barrels and buckets scattered in her yard. "Of course I've used the rainwater. If I don't have water, how am I supposed to take a shower?" she asked.

Even the water she hauls may be contaminated, so Barraza purchases gallons of water at a time to drink and cook with.

But her biggest fear is that she won't be able to make the trip into Presidio as she gets older.

"I knew there wasn't running water when I moved here," Barraza says. "But I was young then. No one gets tired when you're young."

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This project was crowdfunded via Beacon Reader. To review donors to the project, click [here](#).

Osage County oil producers blast BIA environmental impact study that has them at standstill

By MICHAEL OVERALL World Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, March 10, 2015 12:00 am

Related story: {span class="blox-headline entry-title"}In Osage County, oil producers blame 'big bad government' for economic crisis

PAWHUSKA — Across the Arkansas River in Kay County, he can apply for a permit one day and start drilling for oil the next. But on this side of the river, Mike Mackey hasn't received a permit since last summer.

"How long can this go on?" asked Mackey, who owns Osage Wireline Inc. and has already laid off half his employees. "For me, at least, not much longer."

He was the last — and perhaps most passionate — speaker at a two-hour meeting Monday night, when the U.S Bureau of Indian Affairs received public comments on new environmental policies in Osage County, where oil producers are blaming the BIA for crippling the industry.

"A month ago, I told the Tulsa World that my business was down 80 percent," Mackey told the nearly 200 people at the meeting. "Now, after February, it's down 90 percent."

Few, if any, drilling permits have been issued in Osage County since August, when the BIA announced that it was conducting a new environmental impact study on the entire county, a process that will take until the end of 2015. In the meantime, to get a permit, producers would have to complete their own environmental assessments on individual well sites, an extra cost that they say just isn't economically viable at current oil prices.

As a result, not a single well is currently being drilled in Osage County, according to the Osage Producers Association.

"We're out here starving on the vine," said Stephanie Erwin, a head-rights owner in the Osage Nation. "In Osage County, the economy is the Osage mineral estate."



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The Bureau of Indian Affairs offices in Pawhuska, OK, Feb. 10, 2015. Oil production in Osage county has stopped due to an environmental assessment by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in response to a lawsuit brought by land owners in the county. MICHAEL WYKE/Tulsa World

Speaking for the BIA, an environmental consultant outlined various options for the new environmental policies that will regulate oil production in the county. A “streamlined management” option would generally apply a standard environmental impact statement on well sites across the county, while an “upfront protective management” option would impose more restrictions on sensitive sites.

But instead of offering feedback on those options, oil producers questioned the need for the environmental review in the first place.

Some producers blame a pending federal lawsuit for triggering the BIA’s environmental review. In the class-action suit, filed last year against the BIA and oil producers, property owners accuse the BIA of lax environmental enforcement, resulting in polluted land and water.

The BIA, however, said Monday that the environmental review started long before the lawsuit was filed and that public meetings had been called as long ago as January 2014 to inform the public about it.

“What meeting?” asked Rob Lyon, president of the Osage Producers Association. “We didn’t know a thing about it.”

In other parts of Oklahoma, property owners could insist on stronger environmental protections as part of a lease agreement with oil producers. But Osage County has a unique situation, where property owners own only the surface of their land, while the oil and minerals underground belong to the Osage Nation.

“We have no desire to hurt the oil industry,” said David Chambers of the Osage County Cattlemen’s Association. “But there’s been a lot of pollution, a lot of damage done. We’ve been asking the BIA for years to improve the rules.”

Confusion continues in Oklahoma over OG&E's Mustang plant replacement plan

by Paul Monies ([/more/Paul Monies](#)) (<https://plus.google.com/100998321323581507732?rel=author>) Published: March 10, 2015

Confusion continued Monday over whether the replacement of Oklahoma Gas and Electric Co.'s Mustang generating plant should still be included as a part of a \$1.1 billion case before state regulators.

Administrative Law Judge Ben Jackson has yet to rule on several pre-hearing motions from two weeks ago asking the Oklahoma Corporation Commission to drop the Mustang plan from OG&E's case.

Testimony in the case began March 3. Jackson is hearing the case on behalf of the three commissioners and will make a recommendation to them after the hearing concludes. The commission has the final vote in the case.

Jackson indicated he plans to rule on the pre-hearing motions after testimony concludes, although several parties in the case want the Mustang plan dropped or split off into its own case before then.

OG&E said it needs to spend \$413 million to replace its aging natural gas units at the Mustang plant with quick-firing combustion turbine units. It said the plant needs to be replaced sooner than expected because of changes in the way it is used after a regional electricity market began a year ago.

Oklahoma Industrial Energy Consumers attorney Tom Schroedter asked Jackson on Friday to make a ruling on his group's pre-hearing motion to drop the Mustang modernization plan from the case.

Parties unhappy with a decision by an administrative law judge can ask the three-member Corporation Commission to rule on the matter.

"What Mr. Schroedter is trying to do here is provoke me into making a ruling now so he can get some exceptions he can take before commissioners and derail this proceeding," Jackson told Commissioner Dana Murphy on Friday. "I really don't think that's appropriate at this time."

Jackson said he was awaiting direction from the other commissioners.

'De facto ruling'

Monday, Murphy again pressed Jackson, saying the lack of a ruling was a "de facto ruling" against the requests to drop Mustang.

In response, Jackson said Commissioner Todd Hiatt had asked for additional time to consider the circumstances. Commissioner Bob Anthony has not publicly commented on the motions to drop the Mustang replacement from the case.

Attorneys for OG&E said the hearing has already started, with the utility presenting eight witnesses and answering more than 1,000 data requests from interested parties.

"I think it's fair that we get to present our case before you rule on the motions," OG&E attorney Kimber Shoop said Friday.

Meanwhile, the attorney general's office, which represents consumers in utility cases, has yet to weigh in on the Mustang replacement. A spokesman for Attorney General Scott Pruitt told *The Oklahoman* last week Pruitt preferred to keep the case focused on environmental compliance.

Pruitt spokesman Aaron Cooper said Monday the office is still involved in settlement negotiations. He declined to comment on whether Pruitt still supported efforts to drop the Mustang plant from the case.

The \$1.1 billion OG&E has asked to recover from consumers could increase bills for the typical residential customer 15 percent by 2019.

Compliance deadlines

In the environmental compliance part of the case, OG&E expects to spend \$700 million to install scrubbers on two coal units at its Sooner plant and convert two other coal units at its Muskogee plant to natural gas. The utility faces compliance deadlines in 2016 and 2019 to meet federal emissions rules for mercury and air toxics standards and regional haze.

Testimony will continue at 10 a.m. Tuesday at the Corporation Commission in Oklahoma City. A public comment period is at 1:30 p.m.

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Emails describe meetings between oil industry, earthquake researchers

by Adam Wilmoth (/more/Adam Wilmoth) (<https://plus.google.com/103410491206050371764?rel=author>) Published: March 7, 2015

Oil and natural gas industry representatives met with the state's head seismologist over the past several years because they were "nervous about any dialog" connecting the state's ongoing earthquake swarm and industry activity, according to a series of emails published this week by EnergyWire.

The emails describe two meetings between Oklahoma Geological Survey Seismologist Austin Holland and executives of Oklahoma City-based Continental Resources Inc. In one email to a colleague, Holland said in November 2013 he had been "asked to have 'coffee' with" OU President David Boren and Continental CEO Harold Hamm.

"Gosh. I guess that's better than having Kool Aid with them....I guess," the colleague responded.

Boren is a director at Continental Resources.

In another email, Holland described a meeting in October 2013 with Jack Stark, then Continental's senior vice president of exploration, and then-Corporation Commissioner Patrice Douglas.

"The basic gist of the meeting is that Continental does not feel induced seismicity is an issue and they are nervous about any dialog about the subject," Holland wrote in the email.

Hamm denied any wrongdoing.

"The insinuation that there was something untoward that occurred in meetings with Austin Holland is both offensive and inaccurate," Hamm said in an email to *The Oklahoman* on Friday. "Austin works for a state agency. Upon its founding, the Oklahoma Geological Survey had a solid reputation of an agency that was accessible and of service to the community and industry in Oklahoma. We hope that the agency can continue the legacy to provide this service."

In an email to the Tulsa World this week, Boren called the meeting with Hamm and Holland "purely informational."

"Mr. Hamm is a very reputable producer and wanted to know if Mr. Holland had found any information which might be helpful to producers in adopting best practices that would help prevent any possible connection between drilling and seismic events," Boren's email states.

"In addition, he wanted to make sure that the Survey (OGS) had the benefit of research at the University of Oklahoma about any possible interference with academic freedoms participated in the meeting understand that."

Holland declined comment to *The Oklahoman* on Friday, but he told EnergyWire the disclosure has not influenced his scientific findings or those of the agency.

"None of these conversations affect the science that we are working on producing," Holland told EnergyWire.

"We have the academic freedoms necessary for university employees doing research."

The published emails also provides insight into early research and discussions.

Holland said in November 2013 he was "quite skeptical" about a potential link between the earthquakes and lake levels at Lake Arcadia. He also described early research into a potential connection with the Hunton dewatering project east of Oklahoma City, where large volumes of water are pumped deep below the surface.

"Since early 2010 we have recognized the potential for the Jones earthquake swarm to be due to the Hunton dewatering," Holland wrote to USGS science adviser Bill Leith in 2013. "But until we can demonstrate that scientifically or not we were not going to discuss that publicly."

In the same email, Holland pointed out that in some ways, Oklahoma's earthquake swarm is unlike cases of induced seismology in other areas.

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([http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://newsok.com/article/5399261&t=Emails describe meetings between oil industry, earthquake researchers](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://newsok.com/article/5399261&t=Emails%20describe%20meetings%20between%20oil%20industry%20earthquake%20researchers))

"While Oklahoma has a lot of disposed of volume, Texas far exceeds Oklahoma and has had much less seismic moment released than we have seen over the past few years," Holland wrote. "Kansas has a fair amount of disposal wells and almost no earthquakes."

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CDC seeks more clues to bioterror lab accident



Alison Young, USA TODAY

8:40 p.m. EDT March 9, 2015

The CDC is back at Tulane's primate center this week seeking more clues to a lab accident that has exposed seven monkeys to a deadly bioterror bacteria and raised concerns about wider contamination.



(Photo: 2008 photo by Brennan Linsley, AP)

Federal health investigators are back at the Tulane National Primate Research Center in Louisiana this week seeking the source of the lab accident that has somehow exposed at least seven monkeys to a deadly bioterror bacteria. State officials, meanwhile, are planning to test wildlife and domestic animals in the surrounding area for possible exposure.

Investigators from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began arriving Monday at the sprawling laboratory and monkey breeding compound north of New Orleans. The CDC will be taking a closer work at worker safety and health practices in the center's veterinary hospital, said agency spokesman Jason McDonald. The hospital has been suspected as the site of the monkeys' exposure last fall to the bacterium, *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, which is not found in the United States.

Despite several weeks of investigation, officials still don't know how the bacteria escaped a secure lab elsewhere at the 500-acre research complex, nor do they know the extent of the contamination — including whether bacteria have colonized soil or water in the huge outdoor primate breeding colony cages on the property. The outdoor monkey cages are near a school, homes, wetlands and a river.

The monkeys were not part of experiments and should have never crossed paths with the bacterium, which can cause serious and fatal illness in humans and animals that may not develop for days to years after exposure. The bacterium is highly regulated as a research material because of its potential to be used in a bioweapon. The bacterium is found primarily in soil and water in Southeast Asia and northern Australia.

CDC staff this week will participate in discussions about environmental issues that will be led by the Environmental Protection Agency or state officials, McDonald said. Louisiana state officials last month formally asked for EPA's help ([/story/news/2015/03/01/tulane-primate-bio-lab-bacteria-release/24137053/](http://story/news/2015/03/01/tulane-primate-bio-lab-bacteria-release/24137053/)) in assessing whether the lab breach has resulted in the bacteria contaminating the environment around the primate center.

USA TODAY previously reported that studies of the bacteria in the wild indicate that the number of soil samples taken by the EPA and Tulane last month was too small ([/story/news/2015/03/01/tulane-primate-bio-lab-bacteria-release/24137053/](http://story/news/2015/03/01/tulane-primate-bio-lab-bacteria-release/24137053/)) to detect the pathogen if present. Tulane officials cite the testing, which involved 39 soil and 13 water samples, as evidence the bacteria never got outside and say it was adequate.

"CDC has found no evidence to date to suggest the organism was released into the surrounding environment and therefore it's unlikely there is any threat to the public health," McDonald said late Monday. "The agency is continuing to work with federal and local officials to assess the situation."

On Friday, tests by CDC identified two more monkeys at the center that show signs of antibodies to the bacteria, indicating they had been exposed to it. That brings to seven the number of monkeys that ongoing testing found to be either infected with or showing signs of exposure to the bacteria. Three monkeys became so ill they had to be euthanized.

The two newly identified monkeys are healthy and do not show any signs of illness, according to a statement Tulane released late Friday. Both were in the same area of the veterinary hospital around the same time as the other animals that tests show were exposed. Because their levels of antibodies are low, the CDC has recommended they undergo additional testing, according to the Tulane statement.

Tulane on Monday declined to answer USA TODAY's questions seeking details of the two monkeys' history at the primate center and whether the animals are among 177 that were treated in the hospital ([/story/news/2015/03/05/at-risk-monkeys-released-from-tulane-hospital/24471615/](http://story/news/2015/03/05/at-risk-monkeys-released-from-tulane-hospital/24471615/)) before contamination was suspected and released into large outdoor enclosures on the primate center's South Campus. The outdoor enclosures hold a breeding colony of about 4,000 rhesus macaque monkeys.

If infected and showing signs of illness, the CDC says, animals can shed the bacteria through their urine and feces, potentially contaminating the soil and groundwater. People and animals can become infected through direct contact with contaminated areas.

Tulane primate center Director Andrew Lackner, in a community situation update posted on the center's website late last week, said that Louisiana's state agriculture and state wildlife departments "are currently preparing a plan for testing wildlife and domestic animals, both on and off [primate center] grounds."

State officials said that testing and surveillance plans are still being developed. In addition, the state agriculture department said it is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on a fact sheet for animal owners, veterinarians and laboratories on what signs to look for in the event there is an exposure to animals outside the Tulane facility.

Lackner, in recent interviews with USA TODAY, has questioned whether the bioterror bacterium possibly already is naturally present in Louisiana's soil and water — but just hasn't been recognized because nobody has systematically looked for it before. In his community update last week, Lackner wrote that "various *Burkholderia* species have been present in domestic animals in Louisiana since at least 2004, long before any scientific study of the organism began at [the primate center]."

It's unclear what organisms Lackner is referring to as having been present in Louisiana prior to Tulane's lab accident. Tulane declined Monday to answer questions about this as well.

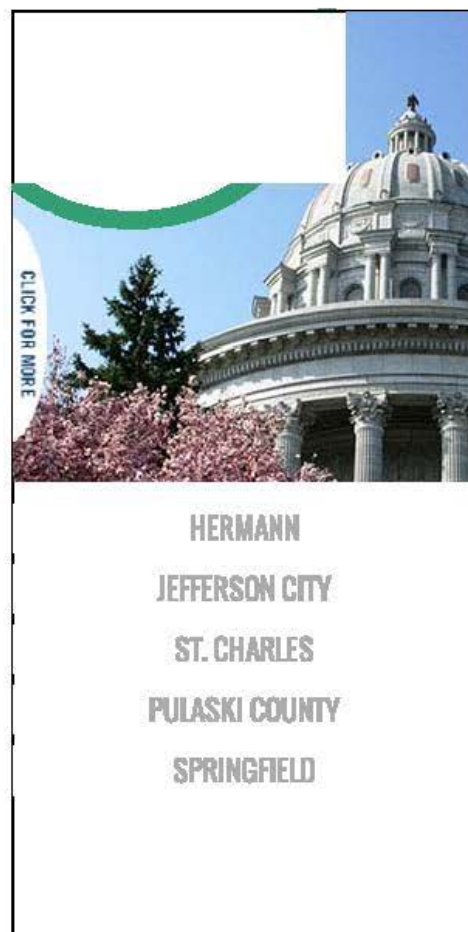
The CDC has said that the strain Tulane was studying in its high-containment laboratory in Covington, La., is known as Strain 1026b. It was originally recovered from a rice farmer who was sickened in Thailand in 1993. Tulane's laboratory strain is identical to the strain of bacteria that sickened the first two of the primate center's macaques last November, the CDC has said.

Jay Gee, a CDC expert on *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, told USA TODAY in an interview last week that the bacteria has never been found in nature in the continental United States. Although some related types of bacteria have been found in North America, they do not routinely cause the kind of serious and potentially fatal disease produced by *Burkholderia pseudomallei*.

For full coverage of the Tulane lab incident and other articles in USA TODAY's ongoing investigation of lab safety, go to: biolabs.usatoday.com (<http://biolabs.usatoday.com>)

Follow USA TODAY investigative reporter Alison Young on Twitter: [@allisonannyoung](https://twitter.com/allisonannyoung) ([http://twitter.com/allisonannyoung](https://twitter.com/allisonannyoung))

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Economy, Energy, Natural Resources: Policy to People

Amended Bill Would Prohibit Cities and Towns from 'Effectively' Banning Oil and Gas Activities

MARCH 9, 2015 | 3:25 PM

BY JOE WERTZ

A proposed amendment to legislation limiting the power local governments have to regulate oil and gas operations expands the bill's language to prevent cities and towns from enacting rules "effectively" banning drilling, fracking and related activities.

House Bill 2178 was authored by Speaker Jeff Hickman, R-Fairview, who also wrote the amendment. I've highlighted the proposed changes below:

Original » A municipality, county, or other political subdivision may also establish setbacks and fencing requirements for oil and gas well site locations as are reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens, but may not otherwise regulate, prohibit, or ban any oil and gas operations, including oil and gas exploration, drilling, fracture stimulation, completion, production, maintenance, plugging and abandonment, produced water disposal, or secondary recovery operations. Such operations shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction and regulation of the Corporation Commission.

Amended » A municipality, county, or other political subdivision may also establish reasonable setbacks and fencing requirements for oil and gas well site locations as are reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens, but may not effectively prohibit or ban any oil and gas operations, including oil and gas exploration, drilling, fracture stimulation, completion, production, maintenance, plugging and abandonment, produced water disposal, or secondary recovery operations, flow and gathering lines or pipeline infrastructure. All other regulation of oil and gas operations shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Corporation Commission.

HB 2178 is one of **eight "local control" bills** under consideration by the 2015 Legislature; Hickman has co-authored a similar measure, **Senate Bill 809**, in the Oklahoma Senate. The bills were filed as residents in communities like Norman, Oklahoma City and Stillwater push for stricter local rules on drilling, fracking and other oil and gas activities.



LOGAN LAYDEN / STATEIMPACT OKLAHOMA

Demonstrators outside the Norman City Hall before a city council committee met to discuss changes to oil and gas drilling rules.

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The State Chamber is [urging lawmakers to approve HB 2178](#) and generally supports such legislation. Some local officials, however, oppose the bills. In a February interview with StateImpact, Stillwater city Counselor Gina Noble said she's against any legislation that limits municipal rule-making authority.

In a committee hearing on the original bill, Hickman told lawmakers that because oil and gas royalties and the energy industry are of "statewide" importance, regulation beyond zoning should be under the authority of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission.

Hickman told lawmakers the bill preserves the ability municipalities have in establishing "reasonable" zoning rules, like those that address issues like traffic, noise and odors. Rep. Cory Williams, D-Stillwater, questioned the definition of reasonable, and who would make that determination.

Hickman's proposed amendment adds an additional "reasonable" qualification to municipally enacted setbacks, adds pipelines and other lines to the list of oil and gas-related activities, and clarifies that all other oil and gas regulation is the exclusive jurisdiction of the Corporation Commission, the state's oil and gas regulator.

Speaker Hickman and his office have not granted StateImpact's request for an interview.

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Scott Pruitt and Rand Paul: Obama administration poised to 'strike greatest blow to private property rights the modern era has seen'

Posted: Tuesday, March 10, 2015 12:00 am

By SCOTT PRUITT and Sen. RAND PAUL

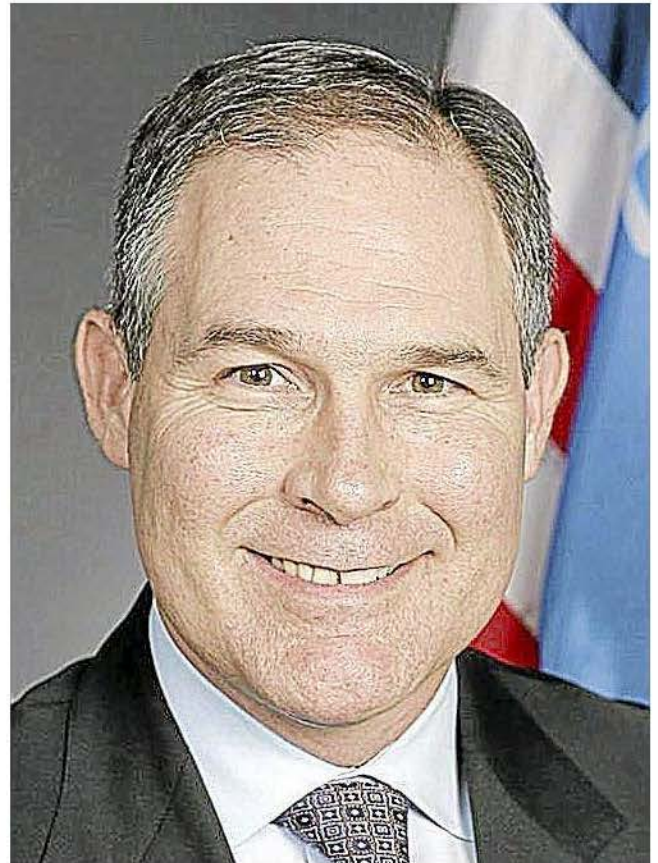
Respect and protection of private property rights sets the United States apart from other nations and has fueled the greatest expansion of economic freedom the world has ever known. Indeed, private property rights are among the foundational rights of any democracy, not just ours.

President Obama's Environmental Protection Agency currently stands poised to strike the greatest blow to private property rights the modern era has seen, through a proposed rule that radically expands EPA jurisdiction by placing virtually all land and water under the heavy regulatory hand of the federal government.

For years, the EPA's regulatory jurisdiction has been limited to the "navigable waters" of the United States, a term that has always been understood to include only large bodies of water capable of serving as pathways for interstate commerce. Regulation of all other waters was, rightly, left to the states.

Unhappy with the limited scope of the jurisdiction given to it by Congress, the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers have simply redefined the meaning of "navigable waters" in an extraordinary way, to include virtually every body of water in the nation right down to the smallest of streams, farm ponds and ditches.

The result of this startling grab is that virtually every property owner in the nation will now be subject to the unpredictable, unsound and often Byzantine regulatory regimes of the EPA. Worse yet, the states are cut out of the loop altogether, leaving landowners to lobby distant federal bureaucrats when the system wrongs them — and wrong them it will.



Scott Pruitt

Scott Pruitt

Simply put, the proposed rule is breathtaking in its overreach, and flatly contrary to the will of Congress, which, with the passing of the Clean Water Act, decided that the states should plan the development and use of local land and water resources.

Being from Kentucky and Oklahoma, we have seen firsthand how the federal government, specifically the EPA, abuses its regulatory power in states that have interests in energy, farming and ranching. Our states are not, and shouldn't be used as, vessels to carry out the misguided ideas of big-government bureaucrats in Washington regardless of the consequences to the economy and to Americans' property rights.

We have both taken action to stop this proposed rule, including filing comments with the EPA urging it to abandon the idea, and introducing legislation in the U.S. Senate that would block the rule.

If we fail, we will all live in a regulatory state where farmers must go before the EPA to seek permission to build a farm pond to keep their livestock alive, where homebuilders must seek EPA approval before beginning construction on a housing development that contains a dry creek bed, and where energy producers are left waiting for months or even years to get permits from the EPA, costing the producers tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars that inevitably will be passed on to consumers.

That is why failure is not an option. The EPA's rule is unlawful and must be withdrawn. We urge the EPA to meet with state-level officials who can help the agency understand the careful measures that states already have in place to protect and develop the lands and waters within their borders. We urge the EPA to listen to Congress regarding the intent of the law to limit the regulation of non-navigable waters. But most of all, we urge the EPA to take note of the harm that its rule will do to the property rights of the average American.

Rand Paul is Kentucky's junior senator. Pruitt is attorney general of Oklahoma. This column originally appeared in "The Hill," and was distributed by Pruitt's office.



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Local Viewpoints

12:19 PM MON MARCH 9, 2015

Defending The BHI Critique Of EPA Rules

By DAVID G. TUERCK

Gabe Elsner, an anti-fossil-fuel activist, [recently published \(http://krwg.org/post/flawed-epa-report-funded-fossil-fuel-interests\)](http://krwg.org/post/flawed-epa-report-funded-fossil-fuel-interests) an Op-Ed on KRWG's web site criticizing a finding by the Beacon Hill Institute (BHI) that the Environmental Protection Agency's clean power rules would inflict substantial harm on the New Mexico economy by driving up electric rates. He claims that BHI's work lacks credibility because it is bought and paid for by fossil-fuel interests. My purpose here is to respond to this criticism which Elsner and his co-authors usually make when we release our studies.

The first point that should be noted is that Elsner is dead wrong about how our EPA studies were funded. They were funded through the Interstate Policy Alliance a project of Employment Policies Institute, which is supported by restaurants, foundations, and individuals — not the fossil fuel industry.

Also, Elsner gets the facts wrong when he claims that "the Charles G. Koch Foundation has donated over \$750,000 to Suffolk University since 2008, with much of the funding going to Beacon Hill." In fact, we pointed out months ago that only about 5% of Koch grants to Suffolk went to BHI research, the rest going to support faculty, graduate students and visiting speakers at the university where we are housed.

Such truths do not matter, however, to the likes of Elsner. The Koch Foundation is a favorite target of the environmental Left since the Koch brothers have used profits earned by producing fossil fuels to support a wide range of philanthropic causes, including academic research. The goal is to punish Charles Koch and his brother David by demonizing anyone who benefits from their largess, including, as in Boston, public television. In their minds of the Koch's critics, it is enough that Koch funding landed somewhere near our desks—even if it never went to support our research — for us to be guilty of a crime against the environment.

Another line of criticism has to do with our "STAMP" model, which we use to translate EPA regulations into economic impacts. The apparent basis of this criticism is that we draw on the precepts of Economics 101 in reaching our conclusions. To wit: "Supply equals demand." Or "If a government policy causes the cost of producing something to rise, its price will rise, too." This orthodoxy is especially troubling for green advocates who aim explicitly to bring about "skyrocketing" electric rates. Meanwhile, you can find our defense of the STAMP model at www.beaconhill.org

<http://www.beaconhill.org/STAMP-Method/ResponseToTEPbybullet2014-0531.pdf>.

One final smear was their reference to a grant proposal that we once wrote (but was never funded), in which we suggested that if state renewable energy rules lead to higher electricity rates, the state might want to consider repealing them. By seeking to convince the grantor that our work might have policy relevance, we allegedly “sought to manipulate economic research by producing reports that came to conclusions before performing any research.” In the fevered imagination of these advocates, even a hint that research that might produce policy changes adverse to their ideological agenda is proof positive of a sell-out to carbon interests.

Our work, however, puts the lie to this claim. Recently, we reported that rules mandating green power could well end up *reducing* electric rates in three states -- [Rhode Island](http://rifreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/rifcp-energy-mandate-rollback-020314.pdf) (<http://rifreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/rifcp-energy-mandate-rollback-020314.pdf>), [Illinois](http://www.beaconhill.org/BHISTudies/RPS/IL/IL-RPS-STUDY-FINAL-2014-0617.pdf) (<http://www.beaconhill.org/BHISTudies/RPS/IL/IL-RPS-STUDY-FINAL-2014-0617.pdf>) and [Maryland](http://www.beaconhill.org/BHISTudies/RPS/MD/MD-RPS-study-BHI-final.pdf) (<http://www.beaconhill.org/BHISTudies/RPS/MD/MD-RPS-study-BHI-final.pdf>). This is not because we sold out to environmentalists in those states but because our methodology yields different results for different states, depending on what the data show. Unfortunately for New Mexico, like many other states, the data show unambiguously that the EPA rules will be damaging to the state's economy.

David G. Tuerck is executive director of the Beacon Hill Institute and professor of economics at Suffolk University in Boston.

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Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 8:51 a.m.

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Arkansas joining states challenging EPA on emissions

By Sarah D. Wire [Twitter](#)

This article was published today at 3:17 a.m.

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WASHINGTON -- Arkansas has been allowed to intervene in a lawsuit challenging a proposed Environmental Protection Agency rule limiting carbon emissions nationwide, state Attorney General Leslie Rutledge announced Monday.

The case is being heard by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. It stems from a proposed rule, 111(d), from the agency that requires a 30 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions across the nation by 2030.

The proposed rule would mean about a 45 percent reduction in Arkansas because of the state's reliance on coal-fired plants. Only five states have a percentage reduction goal greater than Arkansas', and energy industry officials have said Arkansas will have to eliminate some of its five coal-fired power plants to comply.

Rutledge has said the rule would negatively impact economic development and electric ratepayers in Arkansas.

"The 111(d) rule from the EPA mandates the standards that Arkansas must achieve, rather than providing guidelines for Arkansas to use in its efforts to reduce carbon pollution," she said. "This rule goes beyond the EPA's authority granted by Congress and seeks to impose a national energy policy that will harm Arkansas' economy."

Arkansas joins Alabama, Alaska, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming in trying to block the rule.

A coalition of states and cities have moved to intervene in favor of the rule, saying it is necessary to fight climate change. Led by New York, those in favor are California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington, as well as New York City and the District of Columbia.

In a statement, Arkansas Sierra Club Director Glen Hooks disagreed with Rutledge about whether the rule gives states flexibility in how to it reduces pollution.

"Unfortunately, one of Attorney General Rutledge's very first actions was to sue the EPA in an attempt to stop the Clean Power Plan. This action is misguided and does nothing to help Arkansas. Passing the Clean Power Plan will create thousands of clean energy jobs for Arkansans while cleaning up our air and improving health," he said. "Our Arkansas officials should work to improve our air, our health, and our economy -- not do the bidding of the dirty coal industry to maintain the status quo."

Metro on 03/10/2015

Print Headline: Arkansas joining states challenging EPA on emissions

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New concept in solar energy poised to catch on across US

Steve Kamowski / Associated Press



MINNEAPOLIS — A new concept in renewable energy is catching fire across the country, allowing customers who might find solar panels too expensive or impractical to buy green energy anyway.

Community solar gardens first took off in Colorado a few years ago, and the model — also known as community or shared solar — has spread to Minnesota, California, Massachusetts and several other states. Capacity is expected to grow sharply this year, and interest is up among both residential customers who just like the idea and large companies that want to cut their carbon footprints.

The gardens feed electricity to the local power grid. Customers subscribe to that power and get credit on their utility bills, with contracts that typically lock in for 25 years and shelter against rate increases. Some developers say customer bills will drop below regular retail rates within a few years; others say the savings begin immediately.

"This is really the year that community solar becomes mainstream," said David Amster-Olszewski, CEO of Denver-based solar garden developer SunShare LLC, which runs two operations in Colorado and is developing more with Xcel Energy Inc., including in Minnesota.

Rooftop solar panels are becoming more popular among homeowners as the cost comes down, but that market is

limited to only about one-fourth of U.S. residences, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, an arm of the U.S. Department of Energy. Community solar opens the door to many more, including renters, customers with shaded roofs and those who can't afford solar panels.

It's friendly to big customers, too. Ecolab Inc. is the first major corporate customer to commit to Minnesota's program. The Fortune 500 sanitation technology company will get enough electricity from a project in the suburbs to provide most of the power for its St. Paul headquarters.

At least 10 states promote ways for multiple customers to share renewable energy systems, according to the advocacy group Vote Solar, and a dozen states are actively promoting community solar.

California issued community solar regulations in late January, requiring three of the state's largest utilities to contract for 600 megawatts of new solar capacity. San Francisco-based Pacific Gas and Electric Co. will build the largest share, which could supply 30,000-50,000 customers, spokesman Jonathan Marshall said.

"A large number of our customers simply can't go solar on their own," Marshall said. "This is a tremendous opportunity for them to go to 100 percent solar if they want it."

In Massachusetts, Clean Energy Collective expects to complete three community solar facilities in June in Uxbridge that'll provide enough juice for 400-500 residential and commercial customers in the southern part of the state. Colorado-based developer CEC has two other facilities in Massachusetts that serve about 100-200 customers and expects to announce more projects soon, spokesman Tim Braun said.

Minnesota's Legislature passed a community solar gardens law in 2013, and solar backers were amazed when Xcel Energy got a flood of proposals soon after opening the approval process in December.

But Xcel complained to regulators that many turned out to be "utility-scale projects," saying it didn't believe that's what the Legislature had in mind. The law defines a garden as 1 megawatt or less, and Xcel said developers simply planned multiple small gardens next to each other to get around it. Xcel worried that its grid might need expensive upgrades to handle all that new electricity.

Solar developers and advocates dismissed Xcel's concerns, saying the more solar that displaces electricity from coal and gas the better.

One solar garden powering up this summer is at Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, where roof panels will serve both the church and other subscribers. Pastor Brenda Froisland said her congregation has a progressive theology and wants to be good stewards of the Earth.

"As we learned more, it became a no-brainer for us," Froisland said. "We talked about using the power of the sun, s-u-n, to glorify the power of the Son, S-o-n."